

The Doctrine of the Covenants.

A

S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

A T

Pennepeck in Pennsylvania,

SEPTEMBER 14, 1783.

WHEREIN IS SHEWN,

That there never was a COVENANT of Works
made with ADAM; nor any other COVENANT
ever made with MAN, respecting Things purely
of a SPIRITUAL NATURE.

4588

By SAMUEL JONES, A. M.

P H I L A D E L P H I A:

PRINTED and Sold by F. BAILEY, in Market-Street.

M,DCC,LXXXIII.

Stephen S. Nelson's

Presented by his worthy
friend the Rev. Wm. Van Horn

Advertisement.

THE occasion of the present Discourse is as follows: The Writer being appointed about eighteen years ago, to preach at the opening of the Association in Philadelphia the year following, he delivered a discourse nearly the same in substance with the present, from Heb. ix. 15. This sermon became the subject of some conversation for a while, and there ended.

At the Association in 1780, he was appointed to prepare the Circular Letter to the churches, against the next Association, on the subject of God's Covenant. This when laid before them in 1781, occasioned some debate; but on striking out that part of it which related to the Covenant of Works, it passed with pretty general approbation.

In the course of the year following, many applications were made to him to publish a Sermon on the subject, that they might have his sentiments on it
more

more at large: And, at the Association in 1782, when near seven hundred of these Sermons were subscribed for, he was prevailed upon to write and publish the same; and the rather as he wishes to promote a spirit of free inquiry, unbiassed by prejudice or the opinions of men.

Nevertheless, as he has a reverend deference to the judgment of those worthy divines, who have treated of the covenants in the received way, he therefore sensibly feels on the occasion: and nothing but love to the truth, and the importance of the present subject to the cause of true religion, could constrain him to deviate from the common mode of explaining this doctrine.

As the whole appears to him so consistent with the scripture account of man's justification by the righteousness and merits of Jesus Christ alone, he cannot but hope it will meet with a favourable reception from those, who favour the doctrines of grace; and as for others, he knows he has but little to expect from them, nor does he beg for quarters.

ACTS

ACTS xvii. 11.

And searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

THERE is no truth more generally assented to, by all parties and denominations of Christians, than this; that the Scripture is the only rule of faith and practice. They all cry, “*To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*” Isaiah viii, 20. Notwithstanding, we have too much reason to fear, that in this case, as in many others, people are generally more sound in principle than in practice. For in drawing up a system of religious truths, for instance, the writers have either too implicitly followed those who have gone before them, or they have consulted their own notions and fancies, and made their systems, not so much what, from the word of God, they would be, as what they imagined they ought to be; and then have endeavoured to accommo-
date

date the Scriptures in support of them. That the Scripture should suffer by this mode of proceeding it is easy to see, when we consider the natural fondness of people, generally speaking, for their own notions, and how pliable the Scripture will become in the hands of such, like a nose of wax, to suit every purpose.

This, however, ought to serve to put us the more on our guard, and to engage us the more to follow the example of the noble Bereans, in searching the Scriptures daily, to see whether the things advanced be so. The reading of the whole verse informs us, that the Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica, on this account, that they searched the Scriptures. It would seem that the Thessalonians, were either, Galilio-like, indifferent about the truth, and therefore would not be at the pains of searching ; or were so bigotted to their received notions, that they would not search further. These are two extremes equally to be avoided by all enquirers after truth. Let us always remember
then,

then, that to be clear of the shackles of prejudice, on the one hand, and of careless indifference on the other: and so press forward in pursuit of the truth, searching for it as for hid treasure, determined to embrace it, wherever we find it, is a noble thing; while at the same time it is fulfilling a positive injunction of our blessed Lord, when he said, "*Search the Scripture.*" John v, 39.

The sentiments, or points of doctrine concerning which we mean at this time to search the Scripture, are those of the Covenants, commonly distinguished into three; the covenant of works, the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption. The first made with Adam in the state of innocence; the second made with him immediately after the fall, which is said to have been afterwards renewed with Noah, Abraham, and others of the Patriarchs; and the third made with Christ.

In searching the Scriptures, whether these things be so, we shall take them up one after another, as they lie before us, and so begin with the covenant of works.

What

What is commonly called the covenant of works, relates to the transactions of God with man, in the state of innocence, respecting the forbidden fruit; which some for that reason call the covenant of innocence; while others call it the covenant of works, as above, as if there ever was, or could be, a covenant relating to service, without works; and others again call it the covenant of life, though it respected death as much as life, if not something more, and which of the two took place. Thus do the inventors and abettors of this notional covenant, disagree among themselves, as is generally the case, when people wander in the dark wilderness of their own fancies, without the guidance of divine revelation.

But what saith the scripture? Let us turn to the passage. Gen. ii. 16, 17. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely

ly die." Now, is there any thing here, that looks like a covenant? Any ifs, any conditions, any stipulation and re-stipulation? Not a word; not a syllable. But on the other hand, we have every mark, every character of a law. First, we have it prefaced with the authoritative titles of the enactor; And the Lord God. Then we have the language of authority and of law; And the Lord God *commanded* the man. After that we have the permission and prohibition, informing the subject, what he might, and what he might not do. Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it. And lastly, we have the threatning, or penalty and sanction, to secure and enforce obedience, or to be inflicted in case of disobedience. For in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. So little appearance of a covenant is there in this place, that it may seem strange it was ever thought of.

But let us search further. Where are the scriptures brought by the write

on this subject, in support of the covenant of works? Is there no passage to that purpose somewhere forward, from Genesis to Revelations? Not one. The Bodies of Divinity, the Baptist and Westminster Confessions of Faith, as well as all the covenant-writers I have seen, they all fail. There is one passage, indeed, in Hosea vi, 7. which they would seem willing to lay some stress upon; but then it must be first mended. The present translation must be found fault with, and another offered in stead of it. The text says. "They like men have transgressed the covenant." But these translation-menders would have it rendered, "They like Adam." What a valuable invention this translation-mending is! How often has it helped people to a scripture, when in the greatest strait! While at other times it has removed scriptures out of their way, that they could not well get over †. But I think

† It is not to be doubted, but that the present translation may be mended in some places; but then, it is sincerely to be wished, that all lovers of the sacred page, would proceed in this business with a sparing and cautious hand, and perhaps never, but where the harmony of the divine writings allow of, or require it.

think the great doctor Gill, who was a master in the Hebrew, lays no great stress on this emendation, while he rests the value of it on the little word *if*; which translation, says he, if it can be supported; he don't pretend to say it can, but *if* it can, it will be a scripture in support of the covenant of works. The passage undoubtedly means no more than this; that they, the children of Israel, who were God's covenant people, as we shall see by and by, had transgressed God's covenant, as men too commonly do transgress or break covenants made with one another. "They like men have transgressed the covenant."

But let us search the scriptures, not to see if there be any passage in it to prove that there was a covenant of works, for the writers before cited have without doubt sufficiently done this, though they have done it in vain; but let us search to see, if there be any other text, besides that in Genesis, in support of the *law* of works, to prove that Adam was under a law, though not

not under a covenant. I have long been of opinion, that one passage of scripture, if it be full and express to the purpose, is sufficient to prove any point; and that to add many others, as is too commonly the way, out of a fondness for many witnesses does but weaken the cause, unless they be full in point. Of human witnesses, it is true, two or three are required in capital actions; but what of this to divine testimony, since, as the apostle says, and as we all allow, "The witness of God is greater." 1 John v. 9. We are however in the present case not at a loss, for every where forward from Genesis, where mention is made of the transaction in question, or reference had thereunto, it is called a law, and nothing else.

In Romans v, 12. for instance, sin is said to have entered into the world by one man, and death by sin. Now as death is the wages of sin, vi, 23. so is sin the transgression of the law, 1 John, iii, 4. Since therefore, the very act of Adam in eating the forbidden fruit, is said to be sin, transgression and disobedience,

bedience, Rom. v. 15, 19; and since sin is the transgression of the law, and where there is no law there can be no transgression, iv. 15: it is clear that Adam was under a law. The apostle argues yet more expressly that Adam was under the law, when he says, that sin was in the world, before the giving of the law by Moses, v. 13; *i. e.*—all along from Adam to Moses. But say he, sin is not imputed where there is no law, Rom. v. 14. “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them, that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression. v. 14: that is infants, who could not be guilty of actual sins, or transgression of a law, as Adam was. Since therefore death the wages of sin, and penalty of the law, reigned even over infants, it must be that sin was imputed to Adam, and to infants on Adam’s account, and therefore Adam was under a law for sin is not imputed, where there is no law. *

More

* In the Westminster Confession of Faith, every sin both original and actual is said to be a transgression of the law of God,—not covenant. So in the Baptist Confession.

Moreover, with respect to the second Adam, is there any thing said any where that he came, or was to come, to fulfil, keep and make good the covenant that the first Adam broke? What was the work of our blessed Surety? Was it not to answer the demands of the law? Did he not stand in our law place? Was he not made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law? Gal. v, 55. Yes, and he answered the demands of the law too, in full, both penal and preceptive, and thus keeping the law made it honourable, Isaiah xlii, 21. Now, this was the very law that Adam was under, even the moral law.

For, though the prohibition of the forbidden fruit, was a positive law, given for the trial of his obedience, yet was he under the moral law, and, by the

profession of faith, Adam and Eve are said to transgress the law and the commandment given unto them, by eating the forbidden fruit. Likewise the Larger Catechism says, Our first parents transgressed the commandment of God, in eating the forbidden fruit. To the same effect the Baptist Catechism says, That sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God,—not covenant.

the transgression of this positive precept, fell from his moral righteousness; nor can there be a breach of a positive law of God, without involving immorality.*

And besides, the nature of a covenant is incompatible with the relation subsisting between God and man, and therefore inadmissible. For the idea of a covenant includes these things following:

1. Mutual wants in the parties covenanting.
2. Mutual benefits enjoyed by them.
3. Power

* In the present case it would be easy to conceive, that Adam, in eating the forbidden fruit, in a manner broke every precept of the moral law; for, he was guilty of setting up another God, of trampling on the authority of the true God, and profaning his holy name; when he gave him the lie, disbelieved his word, disobeyed his command, and transferred all the honour of faith, worship, obedience, and hope, to another. He dishonoured his parent in the highest manner. He was guilty of murder, in murdering himself and posterity, soul and body. He was guilty of theft and robbery, in robbing God of his glory, himself and posterity of innocence and happiness. While to receive a false witness, and act upon it, was no better than to bear false witness. And finally, he coveted the goods and property of another and not only coveted, but took possession of, and devoured at once. Nor would it be difficult to shew that this one sin involved in it, infidelity, pride, ingratitude, contempt folly, cruelty, and those other affections and aggravations of sin.

3. Power in each party to perform the conditions of the covenant.

4. Each party is brought under obligation to the other, by the performance of those conditions.

5. Merit on both sides.

6. Either party may refuse, or object to the proposed conditions.

7. And, lastly, neither party ought to be under prior obligation to the other, respecting the conditions of the covenant.

Now, of these particulars not one can be admitted in the present case, except the third. For who will presume to say, that the Almighty stood in any need of the service of man, or of any of his creatures; or that he could be benefited by the service of any of them; or that the service performed could bring the glorious Creator under obligation to the creature; or that the creature could merit by his doings; or that man could refuse or object to what was enjoined on him; or lastly, that man was not under prior obligations to perform all that was required of him,
and

and therefore would have been an unprofitable servant after all he had done Luke xvii. 10.

From the tenor of scripture then and the nature of a covenant, it is manifest there never was a covenant of works made with Adam.

But some, perhaps, will object and say, "How could Adam be a public head, if he was not a covenant head *i. e.* if there never was a covenant of works?" As if there was no way of being a public head, but in a covenant way. It might seem sufficient here to observe, that if there never was a covenant of works, as we have seen there was not; and if Adam could not be a public head, but in a covenant way, then he was no public head at all. But to me, there appears an easy way of solving this difficulty. That Adam was a public head and representative of his posterity, who were to stand or fall with him, no one can doubt, who will read the fifth chapter to the Romans and the fifteenth of the first epistle to the Corinthians, with some other passages.

sages; and who will consider the event of the case in question, and the nature of things. But then, you will ask, "How could it be, if there was no covenant?" I answer, just in that very way it ought, and only could be, and that is, The appointment of God. It was the pleasure and will of God, that Adam should stand in this public character and relation to his posterity; and so be a lively figure, or type, of him who was to come.

If any should enquire what advantage there is in denominating this transaction with Adam, in the state of innocence a law, rather than a covenant; we answer, much every way. First, in that it is of dangerous consequence to change the names of things, and put one word for another of very different import, * as will readily appear to any one, who will consider how much mankind are imposed upon by names, which is the

* We may say of the word covenant, what doctor Ridgley, with his usual candour, says of the word stipulation, as applied to this doctrine. But, says he, since it is to use a word without its proper ideas, which others annex to it, I humbly conceive this doctrine may be better explained without it.

the ground of that wo pronounced by the prophet, when he says, " Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter," Isaiah v, 20. And then the difference here is not in name only. A law and a covenant are very different things, as we have seen above. Besides, is there no advantage in adhering to the scripture? If we deviate from it in one point, why not in another, why not in every thing? To which we may add, that in following the Scripture by denominating this transaction with Adam a law rather than a covenant, we gain this mighty advantage, that we avoid nursing that legal strain of spirit, so natural to mankind, and at the same time so injurious to their everlasting happiness. To talk about covenants between God and men, and yet to pretend to be opposed to Arminianism, is a perfect solacism in divinity. Is it not manifest that all true Calvinists, all, who in reality favour the doctrines of grace, are amazingly

ingly embarrassed with the notion of covenants made with men respecting spiritual things, and pull down with the one hand, what they build with the other? Thus, when they speak of the covenant of works, they will tell you, that it is a law-covenant. And when they speak of the covenant of grace, made with Adam and the faithful, they say it is not a covenant properly, but a free, absolute, unconditional covenant. Thus explaining away what they would seem willingly to establish.

We shall now dismiss this head of discourse, and pass on, in the second place, to consider the ground of what is called the covenant of grace, which is said to have been first made with Adam, and afterwards renewed with others of the patriarchs, in favour of the faithful.

The passages of Scripture on which this is pretended to be founded, are those which relate to the discovery and manifestation of the rich grace of God, with respect to the recovery and redemption of sinful man, from his lost state

state and condition by the fall. But why these manifestations should be held forth to our view, under the notion of covenants, is hard to lay. For when we search the Scriptures, whether these things be so, we find no appearance of that kind.

The first dawning of the gospel, and, at the same time, the first glimmering of hope, appeared to Adam, in the promise that was made respecting the seed of the woman, which was Christ, Gal. iii, 16. that it should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii, 15.

Although this was addressed to the serpent, yet being overheard by Adam, whom it more immediately concerned, and being comprehended by faith, under the influence of the spirit, it afforded some ground of hope. Here the eternal counsels of the mysterious grace of God began to unfold themselves.

In the promise made to Abraham, which was afterwards renewed to Isaac and Jacob, Gal. iii. 8. the same gospel grace breaks forth with clearer light. What had before been spoken in more
general

general terms, of the seed of the woman, is now said in a more particular manner of the seed of Abraham. "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed," Gen. xxii, 18.

To Jacob the very time of accomplishing the promise was limited, while it was said; "The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be," Gen. xlix, c.

Moses renders the promise still more manifest, while he points out a character and likeness. "A prophet," says he, "shall the Lord thy God raise up unto thee, of thy brethren like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken," Deuteronomy xvii, 5.

In the prophets, who were much further advanced in the dispensation of the promises, approaching to the fulness of time, hastening to the coming of the Messiah, you have his virgin mother, Is. vii, 5. place of birth, Mich. v, 2. and other circumstances particularly pointed out.

Only

Only observe the order and progress of the Divine promises, gathering light and strength as they advance. When the first intimation of a Saviour was given, he was to be sought for among all the human race. Afterward we are directed to the particular seed of Abraham. Of Jacob's numerous sons, the tribe of Judah is taken: Of the tribe of Judah the family of Jesse, Is. xii, 10; and of Jesse's sons, the house of David, Jer. xxiii, 5. Thus reducing as it were to a point, what had at first been delivered but in very general terms.

These are some of the leading and principal discoveries that were made to the world, of our blessed Saviour, before his incarnation. Thus did the promises and prophecies become brighter and brighter, until at last they shone more clear in their full accomplishment, when the Sun of Righteousness rose, dispelling darkness, and spreading the light of the gospel day. But what do we see in all this like a covenant? Nothing at all. No not the least shadow of it.

Let

Let us now see how the apostles of our blessed Lord understood these things. What is the language of the New Testament? Exactly of the same tenor with what we have seen above. It speaks of promises, gifts, legacies; all free, absolute and unconditional. Let us cite a few passages: For the promise is unto you and to your children, Acts ii. 39. Of this man's seed has God according to his promise, Acts xiii. 23. For the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers, Acts xxvi, 6. Heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 21, 22, 29. The promise of eternal inheritance, Heb. ix, 19. To perform the mercy promised, Luke i. 72. And this is the promise, that he has promised us, even eternal life 1 John ii. 25. For all the promises of God in him, are not yea and nay, but yea and amen, 2 Cor. i. 20. In like manner we read of gifts: If thou knewest the gift of God, John iv. 10. Free gift, Rom. v. 15—18. Unspeakable gift, 2 Cor. ix. 15. Gave gifts unto men, Eph. v. 8. Hence also, the administrations of grace are called, the
 Old

Old and New Testament, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 14. because a testament commonly contains free gifts and legacies made over and insured to the heirs. How contrary is all this to the language and nature of a covenant.

In pages 15 and 16, we observed, that not any of the particulars included in the idea of a covenant could be admitted, in the transaction between God and man in the state of innocence, except one. But here, with respect to a covenant made with fallen man concerning spiritual things, not one exception is to be made. The idea of a covenant is totally excluded. In the state of innocence man had power, and that was the only particular admissible. But now, he has lost his power, and there is not the least room left for the idea of a covenant on any ground whatever. The whole and sole dependence of man in his present state is the grace, the free grace of God.

Is it not strange, to hear people talk, that faith and repentance are the terms and conditions of the covenant made

D

with

with man since the fall; and that the grace in this covenant consists, in that the terms are easy, and power given to perform them. † What work! What strange work! By those that pretend to favour the doctrines of grace too: endeavouring thus to convert the gospel of the free grace of God into a covenant of works, with terms and conditions. Well may we address these men in the language of the apostle, when he says, "Ye are fallen from grace." Gal. v, 4. What a pity that they have yet to learn, that faith and repentance are the gifts of God, and the effect of his grace wrought in us, not any thing wrought by us: And that they are so far from being easy, or easier than those things required of Adam in the state of innocence: that while these were perfectly practicable and easy; those are absolutely impossible. A man may as well attempt to remove mountains, as to exercise faith and repentance. How shall he hate and loathe

† Others again, second confines to the first, talk that sincerity is received in lieu of perfection.

loathe that, which it is as natural for him to love and delight in, as it is for him to love himself? Or how shall he loathe and abhor himself on account of that which he rolls as a sweet morsel under his tongue, Job xx, 12. But when it is said, that power is given, freely given, to perform these impossibilities: this is destroying the nature of a covenant, converting terms and conditions into mere acts of sovereign grace, and transferring the claim of merit from us, to him, who does all our works in us, Is. xxvi, 12.

As for those, who hold the power and liberty of the will of man to do good in the present state, as well as in the state of innocence; and who therefore talk of terms and conditions to be performed by man, on performance of which, he pleads the merit of his good deeds, claims the forgiveness of his sins, and full admission into happiness: it must be owned they are tolerably consistent with themselves, though they be totally inconsistent with the revelation of God's method of grace, which must bend and give way to their carnal and
natural

natural notions of things. But those, who hold that man has now lost his power and inclination to do good; that he is dead in trespasses and in sins, Eph. ii, 1; that he is prone to evil as the sparks to fly upward; that it is God must work in him both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure, Phil. ii 13, and after all, that man's dependence is not on the merits of his own doings but solely on the merits of another, even that of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; that these should talk of covenants, terms and conditions, makes that they are neither consistent with themselves, nor the word of God. They may have sound hearts derived from their experience, and in some measure sound heads; but are strangely led astray by those legal expressions and modes of speaking, so totally foreign to the gospel.

We shall now pass on to consider the covenant made with the nation of the Jews, and a passage or two in the Prophets and so hasten to the last head of discourse.

The

The covenant made with Israel in the wilderness, commonly called the Abrahamic covenant, merits particular attention. When we consider this covenant, it appears to contain nothing of spiritual things; nor to have any reference thereto, further than that the gospel promises, explained above, were mentioned along with it. It referred altogether to selecting the seed of Abraham from among the nations of the earth, to a national church state, and, in that respect, a peculiar people, Deut. xxvi, 18. and to the enjoyment of the land of Canaan. The outward rituals and ceremonies of their church-worship, and serving the Lord as their king in their state of Theocracy, which they promised and had in their power to do, they were to observe, as the conditions of enjoying the promised land, and prosperity therein. Want of attention to this circumstance has been the occasion of much confusion. The first mention of this covenant was made to Abraham, which was afterward renewed with Isaac and Jacob, but it did not take its full form,

form, until it was made with the whole body of the Jewish people in the wilderness. But let us consider the passages particularly that make mention of it.

To Abraham it was said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy fathers house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3. Afterward, when he had come into the land of Canaan, it was said; "Unto thy seed will I give this land, Gen. xii, 7. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee: And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God," Gen. xvii. 7, 8. Here we see that the land of Canaan was the object of the covenant

nant. And afterward, the same was renewed with Isaac, because Abraham had fulfilled the conditions of it. "And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and I will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws," Gen. xxvi. 4, 5. So again to Jacob, nearly in the same terms, xxxvii, 13, 14.

In the wilderness as we mentioned before, the whole assumes more fully the form of a covenant; and we have the terms and conditions of it, and the consent of parties more at large.

"And Moses went up unto God;
 "and the Lord called unto him out of
 "the mountain, saying, Thus shalt
 "thou say unto the house of Jacob, and
 "tell the children of Israel. Ye have
 "seen what I did unto the Egyptians,
 "and how I bare you on eagles wings,
 "and brought you unto myself. Now
 "therefore, if ye will obey my voice
 "indeed, and keep my covenant, then
 "ye

"ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me
 "above all people : for all the earth
 "is mine. And ye shall be unto me a
 "kingdom of priests, and an holy na-
 "tion. These are the words which
 "thou shalt speak unto the children of
 "Israel. And Moses came and called
 "for the elders of the people, and laid
 "before their faces all these words,
 "which the Lord commanded him.
 "And all the people answered together,
 "and said, All that the Lord has spok-
 "en we will do. And Moses returned
 "the words of the people unto the
 "Lord," Exod. xix, 8.

In these words we seem to have the
 preface, and leading heads of the cove-
 nant proposed to the people before hand
 to which they assent. Then, in the
 20th, 21st, 22d, and 23d chapters fol-
 lowing, we have the particulars of the
 covenant penned down at large, so far
 as it respected the moral and civil law.
 And afterwards the same was read to
 the people for their assent, which they
 do, with some formal circumstances of
 confirmation, Exod. xxiv, 3, 8.

" And

“ And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said: All the words, which the Lord hath said, will we do,” &c.

Then in the following chapters we have the ceremonies of divine worship entered at large; and, in the 26th chapter of Leviticus, the same are reduced into the form of a covenant.

Thus you see, this covenant (or, if you will, these covenants) respected only temporal blessings, and was enforced only by temporal rewards and punishments.

And forward, in the Old Testament, where ever mention is made of this covenant, or reference had thereunto, it is always spoken of and considered in this light. See Josh. xxiii. 16. Deut. xxix. 21--25. Jer. xi. Hence were the people of the Jews so often distressed and harrassed in the land of Canaan, for their breach of this covenant, Judg. ii. 20, ; and led out of it into captivity, 2 Kings xviii. 11, 12; and finally
 E rejected

rejected from being the people of the Lord. And here it must be observed, that even this Israelitish covenant, was not a covenant properly, but as it were a law, tho' it was delivered in part in the form of a covenant. So far as it enjoined those things, that were of a moral nature, which they were therefore under prior obligation to observe and do, it was a law : but, it was a covenant so far as it respected their theocratical state of government, and was a compact between them and the Lord their King ; wherein he condescended to come under certain engagements to them as his people, upon certain conditions, which they promised, and had in their power to perform.

Now, as this covenant only referred to morality, the civil polity of the Jews, and the outward rites and ordinances of worship, which the apostle calls, Carnal ordinances and a worldly sanctuary, Heb. ix. 1. 10; and contained only temporal rewards and punishments, but nothing of spiritual blessings or gospel grace, unless it be in a typical way : It is clear, they might have kept
this

this covenant in full, and not have been a whit the nearer heaven, or the more entitled to everlasting happiness.

To hold forth the pardon of sin, and the justification of the sinner; and then heaven and happiness as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, without any meritorious conditions, to be performed on the part of man; this is peculiar to the gospel, and the glory of it. The glory I say of that gospel, with which the covenant now before us had nothing to do, unless typically, and which was first held forth to Adam, afterwards gradually increased in light, until at last it broke forth with meridian brightness, when the day spring from on high visited us, Luke i, 78. And on this very account, the Israelitish covenant is considered as being far inferior to the gospel, and particularly the dispensation of it, in these passages in the prophets, of which we made mention above, and which we shall now pass on to consider.

In Isaiah we read, “ As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord,”

Lord," &c. Isa. lix. 21. Whether this text refers to the gospel or not, is a little doubtful. If it does, it will be of the same import with that in Jeremiah, where we have these words; "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which my covenant they brake, altho' I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity

quity, and I will remember their sin no more," Jer. xxxi. 31---34.

This passage undoubtedly refers to the gospel. But then, you see nothing in it that looks like a covenant. No ifs, no terms, no conditions: nothing to be performed by the creature in a way of merit. But, on the contrary, the language here is pure gospel. It is not, "I will, if they will;" but, "I will, and they shall." "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts;" the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Spirit; "And will be their God, and they shall be my people;" according to that saying, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The genuine language of sovereign grace.

Now the prophet speaks of these spiritual blessings, this pure gospel, as being totally different from the contents of the Israelitish covenant. For, says he, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the

the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers : " no, verily ; but altogether different from it ; as different as spiritual things are from temporal, as the heaven is from the earth.

If any should here enquire, " Why then is it called a covenant, if the contents of it be pure gospel, and the two are so very different ? " For their satisfaction I would suggest the following considerations.

1. That the word covenant in the Old Testament sometimes means a statute, ordinance, establishment, appointment and decree : as in Jeremiah xxxiii. 20. " Thus saith the Lord, if you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night." *i. e.* My appointment of the succession of day and night. So in Gen. ix, 9, 11. God is said to make a covenant with Noah and his family, and with the beasts of the earth, that all flesh should not be cut off any more by the waters of a flood ; which can mean nothing more than the appointment

poinment and decree of God in this matter. And again in Numb. xviii, 19. the same thing is said to be a statute and a covenant, and in the 8th verse an ordinance; respecting the portion of the Priests and Levites. So that the word covenant is not always to be understood in a strict sense. Thus in the text in question, when it is said, Behold I make a new covenant, as it refers to the gospel, or New Testament dispensation, by way of distinction from the old covenant, or Old Testament dispensation, it is not necessary that we should understand any thing more by it than dispensation: and it certainly means no more.

2. That the use of the word covenant might be more consonant with that legal dispensation, than that of a Testament. Especially,

3. As the prophet was about to draw a comparison between the two dispensations, in order to shew the pre-eminence of the one to the other: since the old was known to that people by the word covenant,

covenant, it was natural to express the new by the same term.

4. And lastly, That it might seem odd to speak of a Testament, while the Testator was yet living; as the apostle observes in these words; "For where a Testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the Testator. For a Testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all, while the Testator liveth." Heb. ix. 16, 17.

In exact consistency herewith we find, that when our blessed Lord and Saviour was about to lay down his life, and considered himself as already dead, at the time of the institution of the Lord's Supper, he lays aside the use of the word covenant, and takes up the more proper word Testament, saying, This is my blood of the New Testament, Mat. xxvi. 28. and from thence forward the word Testament is constantly used when reference is had to the dispensation of Grace *. Whence

* The words covenant and testament seem to be used rather promiscuously in our English translation of the New

Hence it is, that we so often read of heirs; as, heirs of God, Rom. viii. 17. Heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 29. Fellow heirs, Eph. iii. 6. By his grace we should be made heirs, Tit. iii. 7. Heirs of salvation, Heb. i. 14. Heirs of promise, Heb. vi. 17. Heirs of the kingdom, James ii. 5. &c. A language and way of speaking perfectly consonant with a testament, but has nothing to do with a covenant.

The word covenant seems to have been introduced into the Christian religion, because it savoured of a legal
F strain,

New Testament. The things expressed by them are three: 1. The Israelitish covenant, or Old Testament dispensation. 2. The New Testament, or its dispensation. And 3. Agreements between men.

The first, not being a covenant properly, and answering to the word *diatheke* in Greek, which signifies a testament or disposition of things, is therefore, as well as the second, always expressed by that word. But the third, as it means a covenant properly, is therefore expressed, in the Greek, by quite other words.

The first and second you have in these thirty-one places following: Mat. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24. Luke i. 72. xxii. 20. Acts iii. 25. vii. 8. Rom. ix. 5. xi. 27. 1 Cor. xi. 25. 2 Cor. iii. 6, 14. Gal. iii. 15, 17. iv. 24. Eph. ii. 12. Heb. vii. 22. viii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. ix. 4, 15, 16, 17, 20. x. 16, 29. xii. 24. xiii. 20. Rev. xi. 19. Also understood, but not expressed, in the Greek, in these two places, Heb. viii. 13. ix. 1 making thirty-three places in English.

And the third you have in these three places, Mat. xxvi. 15. Luke xxii. 5. Rom. i. 13.

strain, so acceptable to those, who are fond of terms and conditions, to be performed by men : while others, who do not favour legalism, yet too incautiously make use of the word covenant, in bare compliance with custom ; tho' these are generally careful to inform us, that it means a testamentary covenant, a free, absolute, unconditional covenant; which is much the same thing as to say that is no covenant at all.

But it is sincerely to be lamented, that any, who are admirers of the glorious Redeemer, and the doctrines of grace, should be thus led astray, in imitation of those, who are at least unfavourable, if not enemies to the doctrine of the atonement.

The sum on the present head is this ; that the glorious dispensations and manifestations of the rich grace and mercy of God in Christ, contain free, absolute, and unconditional promises, of the free, rich and unmerited gifts of God, conveyed to the heirs as legacies, in a testamentary way.

Having thus said what seems necessary

ry on the two first heads of discourse, at least so far as our bounds will admit, we shall now come to the third and last, which is the Covenant of Redemption, made with Christ. This relates to the glorious transaction between the persons of the ever blessed Trinity, respecting the recovery and salvation of fallen man.

In searching the scriptures, that we may draw from that pure fountain our knowledge of that wonderful discovery, and unparallelled instance of rich grace, we find it is spoken of under different views. Among these that of a covenant may claim our first attention. If ever there was a covenant of grace, this is it: forasmuch as it exhibits the most glorious display of grace and mercy, that ever appeared to men or angels. If ever there was a covenant of redemption, here you will find it: since the redemption of the elect was the object of it. And, on the part of Christ, it was a covenant of works too: forasmuch as the great work of redemption, the fulfilling the law of God in behalf of his people, for whom he undertook as their surety,

was

was performed by him. As it is written, "Be surety for thy servant for good," Ps. cxix. 22. "Lord I am oppressed, undertake thou for me," Isaiah. xxxviii. 14. "I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24. "The ransomed of the Lord," Is. xxxv. 10. "And to give his life a ransom for many," Matthew xx. 28.

The principal places of the Scripture that speak of this glorious transaction between the persons of the adorable Godhead, respecting man's recovery, as a covenant, are these following: "And my covenant shall stand fast with him, Psal. lxxxix, 28. And give thee for a covenant of the people, Is. xlii. 6. xlix, 8. Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, liv, 10. As for thee also by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, Zech. ix, 11. Even the messenger of the covenant," Mal. iii, 1.

Now as these passages evidently refer to Christ, who is called the Messenger of the Covenant; is said to be given for a covenant of the people; that this covenant

nant

nant with him should stand, even the covenant of peace, which should not be removed; and that his prisoners should be sent forth out of the pit, even by the blood of his covenant; there is no room left to doubt, but that there was, as it were, a covenant engagement entered into between the persons of the Trinity, with a view to accomplish the great work of man's redemption. And besides, there is nothing forbids admitting of a covenant here. For first, it has not a dangerous tendency, to encourage and nourish a legal strain of spirit, as the notion of a covenant made with man has. And then, there is much more room here for the idea of a covenant, than in the other case. For the parties were upon equal footing, on equal terms and equally interested; they were not under prior obligations; and they had power to perform the conditions, or engagements entered into.

It must, however, be remembered, that even here, the idea of a covenant complete in every part cannot be admitted; since the parties were not in want,

want, nor could be benefited. Which perhaps may be the reason, why this glorious transaction is spoken of in many other places under other views. The chief of these is that of a counsel, according to these scriptures; “ And the counsel of peace shall be between them both, Zech. vi, :3. For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God, Act. xx, 27. The immutability of his counsel, Heb. vi, 17. Being delivered by the determinate counsel of God, Act. ii, 23.

Here we are given to understand, that the persons of the blessed Trinity held a counsel, speaking after the manner of men, to deliberate, devise, and contrive what should be done, to recover and save fallen man. In this counsel the whole scheme was adjusted and settled; who should be saved, by what means, and after what manner: even in that glorious manner, which is held forth to us in Divine Revelation, wherein the glory of all the Divine attributes is secured and even advanced, Satan defeated, and a door of hope opened to man.

Now

Now in consequence of thus adjusting and settling the whole, there was a fixed resolution or purpose what to do. So the apostle speaks; "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," Eph. iii, 11.

Then also the blessed Redeemer was chosen or elected to the great work. Hence the prophet: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Is. lxii, 1. And he was not only chosen, but also appointed thereunto, or fore-ordained, according to Peter; "Who verily was fore-ordained, before the foundation of the world," 1 Pet. i, 20.

The great and glorious plan of redemption, the result of the wisdom and grace of God, being thus settled; and the Redeemer chosen and appointed; it remained to publish, reveal, and manifest the same to the world, that in the gospel especially man might see the odious nature of sin, and repent; and might by faith look to him, on whom his help was laid, and be saved. This manifestation of the grace of God took place

place immediately after the fall, and became brighter and brighter in after ages, as we have seen above, until, in the fulness of time, the chosen of the Father was sent, John x, 36, received a commandment to accomplish the whole, John x, 18, he obeyed, Pf. xl, 7, 8, and was rewarded, Pf. ii, 8. Phil. ii, 9,

Now, as these latter expressions of Scripture may seem not to comport so well with the nature of a covenant, let it be remembered, that they refer, not so much to the establishment of the glorious scheme, as to the accomplishment of it. In the first the Redeemer was God, in the second God-man. For, though a person may have no claim on another, prior to some covenant or agreement, yet afterward he may. And the person of the Redeemer is not to be considered simply as God, but rather as God-man, in the accomplishment of this glorious work. Now, in this capacity, it is not inconsistent to conceive of his being a servant, being sent, receiving a commandment, obeying and being rewarded. Nor is there any inconsistency between

tween the notion of a counsel held to concert matters, and that of a covenant entered into ; forasmuch as the latter might be the result of the former *.

Above we mentioned in the general, that the whole plan or scheme of redemption, was contrived, adjusted and settled ; but it is necessary we should speak of it a little more particularly

The great difficulty in this wonderful consultation, which would have puzzled men and angels, was to contrive a way for the venting of mercy, and at the same time leave immaculate the glory of Divine justice. The different claims of these two leading perfections of Deity, rendered the undertaking in a manner insuperable. But Divine wisdom interposes ; as the apostle speaks of the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii, 10 ; and

G by

* Should any be of opinion, that as the word covenant is only used in the Old Testament, as being more consonant to that legal dispensation, but never in the New, it ought therefore to be laid aside : I am easy ; since I can see no bad consequence would follow. For I would not promote a dispute about words, when they are not of dangerous tendency. To me, however, there appears sufficient ground for the use of the word Covenant here, as well in the language of Scripture, as in the nature of things.

by the unfathomable depth of its researches, finds out and produces that mysterious display of rich grace, which the angels with astonishment desire to pry into, 1 Pet. i, 12; wherein "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Ps. lxxxv, 10.

In the accomplishment of this glorious work, the parties in the great counsel seem to have assigned them each, or to have each one taken upon him, his separate part; *i. e.* generally speaking. To the Father it pertained to preside over the whole and see it accomplished, send the Mediator, John x, 36, furnish him for the work, Ps. xlv, 7. Col. i, 19, and uphold him therein, Isa. xlii, 1.

The Son, the second person in the glorious Trinity, was to assume human nature, answer the demands of divine justice, in behalf of his chosen ones, as their Surety, and by that means bring in an everlasting righteousness, Dan. ix. 24.; that God might be just, and yet the justifier, Rom. iii. 26. This he accomplished in full; receiving the approbation

probation of the Father, that he was well pleased in him; he laid down his life, then rose from the dead, Rom. iv. 25.; and therein triumphed over death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, Col. ii. 15; and ascending into heaven, Eph. iv. 8. he took his seat on the right hand of the throne of God, Heb. xii. 3; being exalted as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins, Acts v. 31, and to make continual intercession for them, Heb. vii. 25.

And the Holy Spirit was to co-operate, in manifesting the whole to the world, and in applying the same to the chosen; namely, by enlightening their darkened understandings, working in them faith and repentance, changing their vile affections, and converting of them from the service of sin and Satan, to the service of the living God; carrying on the work of grace begun, Phil. i. 6; and keeping of them by the power of God unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5; by every means making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,
Col.

Col. i. 12 ; and finally bringing them to the full possession of it.

Thus, my brethren, we have searched the Scriptures, with reference to the covenants ; and have seen, that there never was a covenant of works made with the parent of mankind ; that Adam was made the subject of moral government under a law, and had a positive injunction, respecting the forbidden fruit, for the trial of his obedience. But, alas ! by transgression he fell from the state of rectitude, wherein he was created ; and, being constituted the public head and representative of his natural descendants, brought ruin and destruction on himself and all his posterity. But man was not left in this deplorable situation. The grace of God appeared for him. We have briefly laid before you the plan of our redemption, concerted in eternity, and brought into effect in time. You see the glorious covenant of grace, which was well ordered in all things and sure. You see the Son of God appointed to the Mediatorial work, and all grace treasured up
in

in him for that purpose. You see him undertake ; you see him accomplish the same in full ; and the blessed Spirit co-operate to make effectual the whole. You have seen the gospel preached to Adam, then to the patriarchs ; afterwards, though still dimly, yet with clearer light in the types and shadows of the Jewish dispensation, accompanied with prophecies and promises, until finally the whole broke forth with refulgent glory in the gospel day. Thro' the whole, from first to last, you see the dispensations of grace to man are free, absolute, and unconditional ; the gifts of God dispensed in a testamentary way. It behoves us, therefore, each one, to prove by gospel marks, that we are of the legatees. For the marks are clear, the will firm, and the title good, to all such, and to none else. Through the whole you see nothing of works in a way of merit, but all of grace. Nothing of the will of man, but all of the will of God ; that we might all, and at all times, cry, Grace, grace ; and whosoever glorieth, might
glory

glory in the Lord. Such, my brethren, is the method of grace.

O blessed and glorious scheme ! What a rich display have we here of the wisdom, justice, holiness, truth, mercy, pity, compassion, and condescension of God ! See the harmony of the Divine attributes in this stupenduous plan ; that is every way worthy of a God ! What shall we render unto him for such rich, unmerited grace ! Never to the endless ages of eternity, never shall we be able to render adequate compensation. O that the love of God were abundantly shed abroad in each of our hearts ; that we might admire, with astonishment admire his rich grace ; that we might for ever love, fear, honour, reverence, and serve him, with all the heart unfeignedly.

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, thro' the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that
which

which is well pleasing in his sight, thro'
Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever
and ever. Amen.